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President: Mr. Nesho (Vice-President) ..... (Albania)

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Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations

Regional cooperation

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

In the absence of Mr. Akram (Pakistan), Mr. Nesho (Albania), Vice-President took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Coordination, programme and other questions (*continued*)

(a) Reports of coordination bodies (*continued*)

(b) Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (*continued*)

(g) Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (*continued*)

(i) Calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Snoussi** (Tunisia) welcomed the recommendations in the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (A/60/16), particularly those concerning the need to explore innovative approaches for funding the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (para. 236), and stressed the need for strengthening coordination so as to ensure optimum use of human and financial resources. His delegation strongly supported the recommendations concerning United Nations poverty eradication activities and the establishment of mechanisms for the exchange of information with regional commissions on the subject.

2. **Mr. Moulton** (South Africa) said his delegation was encouraged to hear that the Chief Executives Board (CEB) planned to develop a set of common approaches to guide the work of the United Nations system (E/2005/63, para. 1). He welcomed its efforts to ensure greater programme coordination among the entities of the United Nations system and the undertaking by the Committee for Programme and Coordination to give more attention to the programmatic aspects of the CEB report in the future.

3. Turning to the report of CPC (A/60/16), he said that he would focus on the conclusions and recommendations in paragraphs 201 to 212 and 227 to 237. While both the United Nations system and the African countries had much to be proud of in terms of their achievements, many major challenges needed to be addressed, the principal ones being lack of human, institutional and financial capacities, which continued to impede full implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) at the scale and pace required. International commitments also did not always translate into development assistance.

4. With regard to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and ensuring African development through the implementation of NEPAD, several reports had reached a similar conclusion: namely that although African countries and the international community had made an encouraging start, Africa was far from realizing the requisite support levels to achieve the Goals. All agreed that a quantum leap forward was necessary. In that regard, United Nations system support would be vital in areas most crucial to Africa, for example in increasing budgetary support for the African Union's peace and security programme on a predictable multi-year basis and promoting long-term solutions to African countries' debt problems.

5. The United Nations system also had a key role in supporting NEPAD in several spheres, inter alia by playing a strong advocacy role to ensure that the special needs of Africa were addressed; ensuring that United Nations programmes and agencies supported NEPAD's activities; and helping to maintain peace and security and consolidate democracy in Africa.

6. South Africa therefore concurred with CPC that much more needed to be done to mobilize resources for programme implementation, to build technical expertise for the management of programmes and to ensure the Millennium Goals were attained within the framework of national development programmes and NEPAD programmes.

7. While welcoming the invaluable work of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) and United Nations clusters in support of NEPAD and the various United Nations agencies, he said that those bodies needed to place greater emphasis on advocacy and resource mobilization and ensure an integrated response commensurate with the scale of challenges facing Africa.

8. **Mr. Boonpracong** (Thailand) said that Thailand had made HIV/AIDS one of its top priorities. It had achieved the Goals in advance of the target date and was on course to go even further and is reducing HIV prevalence among reproductive adults to 1 per cent by 2006. Thailand was ready to share its experiences and best practices in curbing this deadly disease; it

believed that a holistic approach to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic must be adopted, so that prevention, treatment and care were all addressed concurrently. A strong political will and the commitment of all stakeholders were needed. In that respect, Thailand had an established National Plan of HIV/AIDS which involved, inter alia, a community-based approach and the promotion of a health-care system and social welfare. Fighting HIV/AIDS must be a joint effort both at the national and international levels. Thailand, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had recently organized a workshop on AIDS prevention in Nairobi, and a similar workshop was planned in Pretoria. Thailand was supporting the ongoing work of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), as well as the implementation of the "three ones" principle of country-level coordination.

9. **Ms. Haycock** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that scaling up a comprehensive response to fight HIV/AIDS to underpin the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was a critical issue for the European Union. Accordingly, she hoped that the Council could address the outcomes from the seventeenth meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) in its own deliberations. She was pleased to see that all the recommendations of the Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors had been adopted. Finally, she noted the central importance of supporting the implementation of the "three ones" principles at the country level.

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (*continued*)

(a) Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development (*continued*) (A/59/823-E/2005/69 and E/2005/50)

10. **The President** invited the Council to take note of the summary by the President of the special high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (A/59/823-E/2005/69), and the note by the Secretary-General on coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus: achieving the internationally agreed developmental goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration (E/2005/50).

11. *It was so decided.*

Coordination, programme and other questions (*continued*)

(a) Reports of coordination bodies (*continued*) (A/60/16)

12. **The President** invited the Council to take note of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (A/60/16).

13. *It was so decided.*

(i) Calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields (*continued*) (E/2005/L.12)

14. **The President** drew attention to the note by the Secretariat (E/2005/L.12) and said that he took it that the Council wished to approve the calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields for 2006-2007 contained therein.

15. *It was so decided.*

(c) International cooperation in the field of informatics (E/2005/67)

(f) Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force (E/2005/71)

Economic and environmental questions

(b) Science and technology for development (E/2005/31)

16. **Mr. Laing** (Information and Communication Technologies Board), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation in the field of informatics (E/2005/67), said that wireless access was being made available in all public areas and conference rooms at Headquarters, with supporting power. The ODS system was freely available on the internet, and the United Nations web page for the delegates had been updated.

17. **Mr. Khan** (Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force introducing the report of the ICT Task Force (E/2005/71), said that while ICT

were now seen as powerful enablers of development goals; insufficient attention had been paid in economic analysis and policymaking to the significance of ICT for economic growth (para. 6). As noted in paragraph 14, the potential of the ICT sector for development was far from being fully exploited. He then highlighted a number of the activities undertaken by the Task Force, such as the efforts of the working party on information and communication technology indicators and Millennium Development Goals mapping (paras. 24-26), the contribution to the work of the Millennium Project Task Force 10 on Science (para. 27), the organization of Global Forums on Internet Governance (paras. 29-31) and Enabling Environment (paras. 51-54) and the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (paras. 59-61). The ongoing programme of United Nations reform was also affording an opportunity for the Task Force to perform its mandate of providing assistance to the Secretary-General in developing a United Nations system ICT strategy.

18. After describing the many elements behind the Task Force's prominence and influence in the ICT-for-development field (see para. 72), he noted that, in order for ICT to positively foster development goals, they must be employed as part of a truly integrated and multi-stakeholder development approach (para. 81). In response to the Secretary-General's request for a more detailed proposal on a broad-based global alliance for ICT and development, the Task Force had therefore undertaken extensive consultations, resulting in broad recognition of the need for ongoing dialogue among all relevant stakeholders (paras. 76-77). Indeed, ICT for development was a cross-cutting issue that was relevant to all internationally agreed development goals and required the concerted actions of stakeholders from all sectors. Noting that there was currently no global platform bringing together stakeholders from all sectors, he said that the consultations and exchanges of views on the proposed alliance were continuing with a view to creating such a platform and presenting recommendations to the Secretary-General.

19. Finally, he said that the dual challenge was to foster connectivity for the world's population and use it to advance the Millennium Goals. Ultimate success in the drive to ensure access would have to be measured by the achievements in sustainable development. He hoped that an open, inclusive and multi-stakeholder global alliance for ICT and development would build upon the foundations that had been laid.

20. **Mrs. Taylor Roberts** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, welcomed the efforts undertaken jointly by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics and the various Secretariat departments to improve the support services available to permanent missions and appealed to Member States to fully support the draft resolution contained in document E/2005/L.33, which requested the President to convene the Working Group for one more year.

21. While ICT had played an important role in enhancing development opportunities in recent years, many developing countries with limited access to ICT still faced a major challenge in terms of global market participation, basic service delivery and development opportunities. The Group of 77 and China therefore appreciated the ICT Task Force's efforts to promote multi-stakeholder dialogue on the role of ICT in development, encouraged its goal of promoting ICT mainstreaming in national policies and strategies, and was in favour of strengthening the Task Force.

22. **Ms. Brazier** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, commended the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics for bringing practical and positive changes to the lives of representatives.

23. **Mr. Pirogov** (Russian Federation) said it was important that the needs of all countries were taken into account in the application of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) to development, including the economic, social and cultural spheres. His delegation agreed with the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the importance of overcoming the digital divide between developed countries and developing countries and transition economies. That could be done, inter alia, by improving science and technical education, ensuring adequate funding, supporting venture capital, promoting the establishment of "business-incubators" and science-parks.

24. Regarding the discussions on establishing a global alliance for ICT and development, his delegation saw the alliance as a forum both for dialogue between all interested parties and for coordinating system-wide approaches to use the achievements of the ICT to implement the Millennium

Goals. Duplication of effort must be avoided and funding must continue to be voluntary.

25. His delegation also supported the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics in providing adequate access of Member States to automated databases to the United Nations information systems and United Nations services. The Group must continue to effectively implement its function as a bridge between the growing needs of Member States in ICT and the work of the Secretariat.

26. The Secretariat had made welcome improvements in its ICT facilities for delegations, including wireless Internet access, password-free consultation of the Official Document System and more up-to-date hardware.

27. **Mr. Snoussi** (Tunisia), noted that, thus far, information and communication technologies had been a source of marginalization, rather than a factor for integration. However, it was now essential to integrate ICT as a strategic instrument for development, as they offered the possibility of partnerships, investment and employment, especially if adapted to the local context. Hence the need for a global digital partnership that reconciled development objectives with commercial interests. Moreover, as noted by both the ICT Task Force and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in their respective reports, appropriate and widespread use of ICT was a prerequisite for attaining the Millennium Goals.

28. His Government was convinced that the World Summit on the Information Society would provide an international response to the digital problem. Holding the Summit in two phases — the first in a developed country and the second in a developing country — was in itself an important symbol, as it gave a message of solidarity and cooperation between two levels of development and two digital realities. Finally, he reiterated his Government's firm commitment to ensuring that the Tunis phase of that Summit was a success.

29. **Mr. Aliyev** (Azerbaijan) said that ICT access was especially important for people living in remote regions. Although the positive impact of ICT on attaining development goals was generally recognized, not enough attention had been paid to the significance of ICT for economic growth and the impact of investment in ICT for developing countries remained largely under-researched (E/2005/71 para. 6). In that connection he drew attention to the importance of financial mechanisms to support ICT for development, and expressed his delegation's appreciation for the work of the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms for ICT for Development, which it believed would make an important contribution to the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society.

30. Efforts were currently under way in Azerbaijan to create a strong economy. Parliament had reviewed a number of laws relating to the information society and the Government was working on a code on privacy and data protection and security of State computer systems. A national strategy on ICT for development had also been adopted. His delegation looked forward to the broad implementation of an e-government system for democratic governance and effective public administration and welcomed the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-backed National E-Government Network Initiative. His Government was continuing to step up financial support to ICT; in 2004, $20 million had been allocated to ICT in education and plans were under way to establish a super-computer centre at the National Academy of Sciences. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led Virtual Silk Highway Project, meanwhile, was expected to provide higher education institutions with Internet access. While more allocations were expected for the creation of a national citizens' register and better application of ICT for electoral processes, there was a need for external support for the ICT sector and greater involvement by regional organizations and international financial institutions.

31. **Mr. Khan** (Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force) recalled that the Council had initiated the groundbreaking approach of building a multi-stakeholder partnership in the ICT Task Force, which for the first time ever had included chief executive officers and business leaders. The Task Force had brought the United Nations development agenda to the heart of the Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, thereby ensuring that the Millennium Development Goals were a central part of the ICT-for-development agenda. Its focus now was how to mainstream the ICT-for-development agenda into the development agenda emerging from the Millennium Summit and the Millennium + 5 Summit in September 2005. If they could be combined, the two agendas would provide a powerful platform for building a real partnership between Governments,

multilateral institutions, the private sector and civil society as they moved towards implementation of the goals. The Council's responsibility was to ensure that the two phases of the World Summit and other United Nations conferences were not seen as two separate streams, but rather brought together to ensure a coherent and integrated follow-up. The multi-stakeholder dimension was essential at all levels. It was therefore very important for the Council to take account of the Secretary-General's proposal that multi-stakeholder input into the follow-up of United Nations conferences should be part of a transparent process that was linked to the Council's work and the broader development agenda.

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (E/60/90-E/2005/80, E/2005/47 and A/60/64)

Regional cooperation (E/2005/15, E/2005/15/Add.1, E/2004/15/Add.2, E/2005/16, E/2005/17, E/2005/18, E/2005/19, E/2005/20 and E/2005/21)

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/60/65-E/2005/13)

32. **Ms. Chew** (Department of Political Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/60/90-E/2005/80), said that it described measures taken by the United Nations system, in cooperation with Palestinian and donor counterparts, to assist the Palestinian people. On preparing the report, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) had made a concerted effort to integrate the analysis of Palestinian needs and United Nations responses according to thematic and sectoral requirements and to highlight the level of investment in each area. An emphasis had also been placed on institutional reform support and private sector development.

33. Although the situation on the ground during the reporting period had remained critical for the majority of Palestinians, the United Nations response had sought to intensify its medium-term development approach while continuing to meet emergency needs. United Nations agencies had assisted the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to refocus on longer-term planning and improved governance, investing some $10 million in technical assistance and capacity-building activities which were of direct benefit to it. The period under review had been marked by the announcement of Israel's disengagement plan from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank, successful Palestinian presidential elections and confidence-building efforts by both Israelis and Palestinians, and internal and external closures imposed by Israel had continued to obstruct economic recovery for Palestinians and complicate humanitarian access. Noting that an estimated 48 per cent of Palestinians were living under the poverty line at the end of 2004 and food consumption per capita had fallen by an estimated 25 to 30 per cent since 2000, she said that United Nations agencies, donors and humanitarian organizations would need to meet a wide variety of programming needs, while balancing short-term emergency requirements with a coherent development focus on the medium and long term. It was therefore vital that the international community continued to provide the necessary resources for assistance programmes for the Palestinian people.

34. Both parties had reaffirmed their commitment to the road map. While steps had been taken to implement the confidence-building measures agreed in Sharm el-Sheikh in February 2005, the recent upsurge in violence threatened to undermine that process. Noting that effective coordination by the parties remained vital to ensuring a successful implementation of the disengagement process, she said that the international community was continuing its efforts to facilitate ongoing dialogue between the parties and secure financial support for the revival of the Palestinian economy following disengagement. A successful disengagement should pave the way for full implementation of the road map which was aimed at achieving a two-State solution.

35. **Ms. Al-Bassam** (Chief, Regional Commissions New York Office) introduced the note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/60/65-E/2005/13).

36. Speaking on behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), she also introduced the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/2005/15 and Add.1), the summaries of the economic surveys prepared by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ECE, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) (E/2005/16 to 20) and the note by the Secretary-General on the project for a Europe/Africa permanent link through the Strait of Gibraltar (E/2005/21).

37. **Mr. Gala López** (Cuba), speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee on Decolonization, welcomed the successful integration of many Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of several United Nations bodies, since that had helped them to develop their administrative and human resource capacity and provided them with relevant information useful to their development process. The economic commissions and some specialized agencies had been particularly active in providing and coordinating assistance to many of those Territories. UNDP, in particular, was to be commended for its enlightened approach. A number of specialized agencies had also assisted the Territories by allowing them to participate directly, as members, associate members or observers, thereby ensuring an additional level of integration of the Territories in the international development process. In that regard, he applauded the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Tourism Organization, all of which had included provisions in their rules of procedure to allow for participation of the Territories, and he urged others to follow their example.

38. Highlighting the role of ECLAC and ESCAP, both of which provided for associate membership for small island non-self-governing territories he noted that whereas the General Assembly had provided for associate members of the regional commissions to participate in relevant special sessions of the General Assembly, the Council had not yet done so.

39. A positive example of support for a Non-Self-Governing Territory was the assistance provided by UNDP to Tokelau, which was entering the final stages of its transition to statehood in free association with New Zealand. In that regard, he urged all Member States, regional and international bodies to show their support for that emerging State by contributing generously to the International Trust Fund for Tokelau. Members were also urged to unanimously adopt the draft resolution on support for Non-Self-Governing Territories.

40. **Mr. Yuan** Yuan (China) said that his country actively promoted regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region as the best option in the age of globalization; indeed, regional cooperation was an effective tool in meeting the challenges of globalization. Provided they were consistent with WTO rules, the many new regional trading arrangements could give comparative advantages to members of the regional commissions and were an effective approach to promoting liberalization in global and regional trade. Indeed, they could supplement the multilateral trading system. China, which participated actively in many such arrangements, took its participation in the work of ESCAP seriously.

41. **Mr. Fedorchenko** (Russian Federation) said that the regional commissions played a unique role in the United Nations system in that they translated global development policy into a specific programme of action at the regional and country levels with the ultimate objective of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. They played a key coordinating role in their respective regions. His delegation supported the goal of fostering cooperation with the main departments, operational programmes and funds of the United Nations, and in particular UNDP, in providing technical assistance to Member States as well as in cooperation with regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations. The regional coordination meetings under the auspices of the Executive-Secretaries of the regional commissions constituted one of the most important forums for such cooperation and should be encouraged, since the interaction of the regional commissions with other regional partners ensured complementarity of the respective partners in the implementation of socio-economic development goals.

42. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, as indicated in the report contained in document A/60/65-E/2005/13, Israel continued, with utter disregard for international law and General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, to subject the Palestinian

population to barbaric and inhumane treatment. Unarmed civilians and children were routinely murdered, houses were demolished while centuries-old olive groves were destroyed. It was impossible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the Israeli-occupied territories where economic indicators remained negative. The report showed that the health of the population was deteriorating steadily due in part to the fact that Israel had buried radioactive waste in the occupied Syrian Golan and was using X-rays at checkpoints. The frequent closures or curfews coupled with the mowing down of children by Israeli snipers had effectively curtailed access to education.

43. The occupation authorities had also used a variety of impediments, including closures, to prevent the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), including schools and clinics, had suffered damages. Settlement activities were expanding with the establishment of nine new illegal settlements in the Syrian Golan and work on the expansionist wall continued, a year after the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice declared it illegal. Israel still did not respect international law. The Rapporteur of the Human Rights Commission had noted that one of the basic objectives of the wall was to drive the Palestinians from their land by making their lives impossible. He wondered how long the international community was going to stand by silently as millions of oppressed Palestinians chafed under the yoke of oppression.

44. **Mr. Sermoneta** (Israel) expressed disappointment that the Council was being misused to discuss a political issue that detracted from its important work. It was even more disappointing that once the Council had decided to debate that inappropriate issue, it was doing so in a way that did not give a credible or accurate depiction of the situation.

45. The report set the parameters for the statistics it used to suit its convenience and changed them just as conveniently when the same parameters would discredit its own arguments. The scope of the report had been narrowly set with the clear intention of discrediting Israel. It took the Palestinian economic situation out of context, ignoring the campaign of terror and violence perpetrated against Israelis over the past four years. It also failed to reflect the significant impact on the health of the Palestinian economy of persistent corruption within the Palestinian Authority. A report of such limited scope could not deliver any constructive message; such blatant propaganda did not belong in the Council.

46. The Council should desist from considering reports framed in language that was biased in favour of one side of the conflict. Reports such as the current one, that respected the rights of only one side and patched together snippets of information without regard to context, exacerbated problems by allowing fabrications and distortions to persist far longer than they deserved. The current movement towards reforming the United Nations was intended to prevent politically motivated reports such as the current one. Neither the debate nor the report would do anything to improve the situation of the Palestinians.

47. **Mr. Siregar** (Indonesia) reiterated Indonesia's support for regional processes and the work of the regional commissions and noted that the Asia-Pacific region had had a mixed performance as far as achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was concerned. Indeed, some countries were projected to reach the targets before 2015 while others were struggling to meet some targets. Indonesia would be hosting a regional ministerial meeting in August in order to identify ways in which the international community could support the region's efforts beyond 2015. The main issues to be discussed included eliminating the existing disparities among and within the Asia-Pacific countries as a result of geographical, economic and social conditions. He urged all countries of the region to actively participate in the meeting at the ministerial level.

48. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia), referring to the report contained in document A/60/65-E/2005/13, said that it presented factual evidence of the ongoing plight of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. It was evident that the Israeli occupation had deepened the economic and social hardship of the Palestinian people, confirming the need for greater attention from the international community. He expressed deep concern at, inter alia, the destruction of agricultural land for illegal settlements and the resource problems, including lack of water distribution and water pollution. He was particularly disturbed by the arbitrary detention of children in Israeli prisons without adequate medical care or access to legal counsel.

49. It was particularly alarming that Israel had completely ignored the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice concerning the separation wall, construction of which clearly violated the economic and social rights of the Palestinian people. It would therefore be extremely difficult for the Palestinian people to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 unless the international community intervened. Violence was never a solution; the only sustainable option was for Israel to end its occupation of the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan.

50. Indonesia remained fully committed to the struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights and their aspirations to live in a secure and independent prosperous homeland. That could be achieved through concerted international action based on the road map. The United Nations and its agencies should continue to play a significant role in alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people. In that regard, the Council should continue its endeavours to assist the Palestinian people to live in dignity, free from want and fear.

51. **Mr. Al-Rasheed** (Saudi Arabia) said that the occupation was the problem. If the occupation were to cease, the situation of the Palestinian people would improve. That issue should remain on the Council's agenda as long as the occupation continued.

52. **Mr. Hijazi** (Observer for Palestine) said that Palestinian civilians, children in particular, continued to bear the brunt of the military assaults the occupying Power launched against cities, villages and refugee camps. The result was the catastrophic socio-economic situation of the Palestinian people, 38 per cent of whom were now completely dependent on food rations. Those figures were the fruit of Israel's brutal military occupation and systematic human rights violations against the Palestinian people.

53. Perhaps no policy was as far-reaching in its detrimental effects on Palestinians as the illegal policy of settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. That policy was in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Despite countless United Nations resolutions calling on Israel to end its policy, Israeli settlement construction had increased throughout the past year. Equally dangerous was the construction of the "expansionist" wall in the occupied territory. Not only was Israel's unlawful construction of its wall resulting in de facto annexation of Palestinian land, but it would render a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict physically impossible. It was important to highlight that, in its Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice had concluded that Israel was under an obligation to cease construction of the wall and to dismantle the sections constructed to date. Once again, Israel had turned a deaf ear to the international community's wishes and had continued building the wall deep into the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and planned to complete construction of the wall around occupied East Jerusalem by September.

54. Over the past year, Israeli occupying forces had killed more than 869 Palestinians, bringing the total number of Palestinian civilians killed since September 2000 to more than 3,670. It was appalling to note that 41 of those wilfully killed were schoolchildren, some of whom had been killed while sitting at their desks. During the same period, the occupying Power had imprisoned nearly 8,000 Palestinians, including at least 259 Palestinian children, in the harshest conditions. In the past year alone, Israeli occupation forces had demolished at least 2,188 homes, rendering tens of thousands of Palestinians homeless.

55. If Israel continued its illegal practices, the Palestinian people would be prevented from meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The international community must take steps to halt the destruction by Israel of the natural resources of the Palestinian people and of those in the occupied Syrian Golan. The occupying Power must choose between walls and settlements or peace and prosperity.

56. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that it was regrettable that the Council was vowing to debate the issue yet again. Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory was aimed at changing the demographic make-up of the Territory. He wished to make three points.

57. Firstly, since the Council sought to promote sustainable development, poverty elimination and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, it must monitor all activities that could impede The attainment of the Goals. Foremost among such activities was the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory. By adopting a resolution the Council would demonstrate the importance it attached to development.

58. Secondly, regarding settlements, the Council had stressed that Israeli settlements on Palestinian land were illegal and that the Israeli settlement policy was expansionist. Forty-one per cent of the West Bank and 45 per cent of Gaza were under settlements. In the occupied Syrian Golan, most land there had been set aside for settlements or military activities; Syrians controlled only six per cent of the land.

59. His third point concerned the wall that Israel was building inside Palestinian territories. It was some three times higher than the Berlin Wall, and approximately five times longer. When it was completed, Israel would have taken over 51 per cent of all water resources in the West Bank. Activities related to the wall's construction were leading to the erosion of Palestinian soil and making it very difficult for Palestinian farmers to reach their farms in the first place.

60. **Mr. Al-Hebsi** (United Arab Emirates) endorsed the views expressed by previous speakers, adding that the item must remain on the Council's agenda for as long as the Israeli occupation continued.

The meeting rose at 5.43 p.m.